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"Metro" System of Local Government

(A Survey)

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Pres. Hugh E. Dunn, S.J.²

Pres. G. Brooks Earnest³

Pres. A. B. Bonds, Jr.⁴

[Growth of many American cities into vast metropolitan communities of suburban cities, towns and villages clustered about the central city is creating complex problems of local government. Duplication of services and costs is matched by artificial "compartmentalization" of adjacent areas, all developing with little or no overall plan or logic.

Herein, four outstanding community leaders examine the problem in terms of the situation in the Ohio area of Cuyahoga County, around the core city of Cleveland. Extracts from four speeches are set forth here, all delivered at a recent luncheon of the Cleveland-Marshall Alumni Association.]

[Dean Stapleton presents the problem and the political viewpoint]

IN GOING FROM HIS HOME to his place of business many a resident of American city suburbs passes through at least two communities. Quite often the route that he traverses is such that he passes through more than two neighboring "cities," "towns" or "villages." Yet, unless he was aware of the exact geographical boundaries, he could not tell when he left one "city" and entered the next, so closely interwoven has the population become in most suburban areas surrounding many American cities. Many a major city today is literally surrounded by a whole bevy of satellite cities and villages—each satellite keenly aware of its separate entity.

For example, in the metropolitan area of Cleveland there are over 57 separate municipal entities, and over 102 taxing authorities—a veritable welter of municipal governments. In

¹ Dean Stapleton of Cleveland-Marshall Law School draws upon experience as the Mayor of the City of Shaker Heights, Ohio, which under his leadership has won acclaim as one of the best governed communities in the Nation. Shaker Heights is one of the eastern suburbs of Cleveland. Dean Stapleton presents the political viewpoint.

² Father Dunn, Pres. of John Carroll University, which is in University Heights, another eastern suburb of Cleveland, presents the sociological viewpoint.

³ President Earnest of Fenn College, which is located in downtown Cleveland, presents the engineering viewpoint.

⁴ President Bonds of Baldwin-Wallace College, which is in Berea, a western suburb of Cleveland, presents the educational viewpoint.

many instances their functions overlap, not to mention their services, tax claims, and so on. As a result of this haphazard growth quite often we are seriously hampered in seeking solutions to a host of problems which apply to the metropolitan area as a whole.

Water problems, sewer problems, crime problems, disease problems and air pollution problems recognize no artificial governmental boundaries. When each community separately strives to solve its own problems, it soon becomes apparent that the solution of one community's troubles hardly is feasible without some cooperation with adjoining communities. For instance, what does it avail the suburban City of Shaker Heights to construct a 48 inch storm sewer draining into a City of Cleveland area, when the City of Cleveland has a much smaller sewer to take this runoff? The one community simply cannot solve this particular problem without cooperation from the other. It would be all too easy to list many other such situations.

As one examines the various separate problems, one overriding consideration immediately becomes apparent. Obviously, some method or means of cooperative planning and action will be necessary. The primary problem is the coordination of efforts. Yet this is the overriding problem the solution of which is taxing the thinking of those who are concerned. The whole complex of many problems turns on the main problem of coordination. Certainly some central authority is needed for those matters which are metropolitan in nature and scope; while certainly, too, some things that are local should be left to the separate governmental units.

In order to accomplish any sort of overall control, each separate community, of course, will have to sacrifice some of its sovereignty. It is no secret that some are reluctant to do so.

It is not necessarily true that financial economy will be achieved with a central metropolitan authority, though that often is put forward as the major reason for adopting a metro system of municipal cooperation. Yet it is likely that such economies will result, at least in the long run. Thus, in Canada, the City of Toronto has a municipal metropolitan body in which some 13 separate governmental units are embodied. Metropolitan Toronto has achieved much in the way of solving county-wide problems, especially those involving its arterial highways, water distribution system, sewers, land-use planning, and rapid transit. But so far very little has been done to abolish the costly separate

governmental units. There are still many separate councils. The overall cost of operation, instead of going down, has gone up. We must not deceive ourselves as to this aspect of the matter. Even so, ultimate economies logically can and should be a long range objective.

In the Ohio area, specifically the Cleveland area, our planners can benefit from the experience of Toronto and other communities. The solution must be tailored to local conditions. Perhaps the Toronto method is not the best one for Ohio. Perhaps a method would be better that is based on the existing Cleveland skeleton system of the authority of the Board of County Commissioners. Here is something to challenge the imagination of those who think about this growing problem. The problem of multiplying community complexes is one to challenge the most resourceful and enterprising mind.

Some day soon there will be (or already are) vast municipal super-city-areas. In Ohio there will be the area of Youngstown, west to Toledo, around the core of Cleveland, and reaching south to Warren. In the New York City area a monster community already stretches from Connecticut to Poughkeepsie to Newark to Cape May. And so on and on.

Can we simply let it grow, like Topsy, without plan or coordination? If we do, the resulting problems will be staggering.

It is long past time that the cities and their surrounding communities joined together in planning and operating in cooperation. A *metro system* can be worked out in the American tradition of cooperation. It *must* be worked out, before the problem becomes insoluble.

[Pres. Dunn presents the sociological viewpoint]

A city is not just a place. A city is primarily a grouping of people. The population of any city is characterized by complete diversity of creed, color, economic status, and cultural background. In all our thinking about the city and about urbanism, that distinctive way of life found only in the city, we must never lose sight of people.

Urbanism as a way of life has many built-in stresses. The tyranny of the clock regulates so much of our daily living. The distances people must travel to and from work take considerable time; quite a cut is made into the hours that families can spend

together. Many families are forced to live in quarters that, humanly speaking, make decent living about impossible. There are too many people who too soon feel the effects of these stresses and become less than productive members of the city population.

The shortsightedness of one neighborhood group can cause hardship for the people of another neighborhood in the same city. The people in one section can refuse to provide adequate waste disposal within their own territory; so they let streams and lake areas become polluted. They forget that the lake they take over as their sewer should really be serving as a recreation area for the people of another neighborhood. So into the lives of the people in this last-mentioned neighborhood comes a new stress—lack of decent recreational facilities. This is just one instance of what happens when some citizens forget that their city is primarily a grouping of people—of many people besides themselves.

[Pres. Earnest presents the engineering viewpoint]

It is no criticism of our forebears that our metropolitan areas grew like Topsy. Competitive industries, founded on the inventions of science and engineering, expanded almost explosively and brought great wealth to the hub cities. They burst through political boundaries without overall plan or government. Problems developed over water supply and distribution, sewage and industrial wastes, refuse and garbage disposal, transportation and land use, health and welfare, education and recreation. Now we have to do the best we can to rationalize the metropolitan areas, to govern them and to make them livable.

There is an old saying that the services essential to the life of a big city area are without political bounds. Precipitation falls and drains without regard to boundaries. Sewage flows by gravity, not by metes and bounds. People live, work, market, shop, and play without regard to the boundaries of municipal governments. Because of unplanned growth and multiple suburban incorporations—not always in the general welfare—the financing of essential services for the people of metropolitan areas has become a major problem.

From the engineering viewpoint the construction of adequate facilities to render these services is feasible and economical. The obstacles, however, are political and financial. There can be no doubt that Cleveland, the core city of our metropolitan com-

plex, must go the first mile with political and financial support of metropolitan services. Cleveland is the natural leader of the Cleveland area. All the people, all the governments, hence all officials and politicians, stand to gain through the cooperative construction and operation of facilities for essential services on a regional basis. If they do not come together soon, a tax-ridden people will, one day, put them together, and the process will surely be painful. The City of Cleveland is not only the wealthiest municipality in the area; it has the most to gain as the hub-city, the heart of our metropolitan region. The situation cries for leadership in the political field, plus full cooperation and coordination of a metropolitan authority, plus appropriate financing.

[*Pres. Bonds presents the educational viewpoint*]

I seldom think of myself as a "mayor," and yet as the responsible chief executive of a community numbering about 3,000 people, including students of day and evening divisions, faculty, staff, and college employees, I might view today's theme as the "Mayor of Baldwin-Wallace College," with quotes heavily applied. At the risk of sounding platitudinous, these are a few of my thoughts:

My principal concept of Metropolitan City Government is that *government is people*—foremost and first of all. Those people who are *least* governed are most free. I am sure that was Washington's concept, and it is the concept of most enlightened city administrations.

Successful metropolitan city government depends upon attitudes—attitudes of administrative officials, attitudes of people. Obviously, the best administrators are those whose concept is that of being a *servant* to implement the will of the people, not a boss to impose one's will on others.

Too many people think of themselves as *taxpayers only*, footing the bill, free to criticize, but all too reluctant to participate actively in government.

Metropolitan city government moves forward smoothly when suburban citizens and officials achieve a reasonable balance between local pride and area cooperation. If all could keep their eyes and minds focused on the question "What are the *end results* we want for ourselves, our families and our community welfare," and could maintain in their attitude an intelligent,

Christian, *reasonableness* in considering problems which involve duplication of services, and "impingement," and invasion of prerogatives—the basic issues would emerge and yield to solution.

The concept that government is *my business*, deserving of some of my *time, interest and effort*, would distribute civic loads, make it easy to pass needed bond issues, and build an area civic pride from which each community would benefit.

Government is *people*—and their actions depend on *attitudes*. A local newspaper has for its slogan: "Give the people light and they will find their own way." This is especially true in government. Each of us can, through our own positive, reasonable attitudes and our own participation in the problems of government, add our own kilowatts to that light.